

Competency Assessment for 4th Year Placement



Is comhcheangal é APPEL idir Scoileanna Cógaíochta UCC, RCSI agus TCD
APPEL is an affiliation between the schools of Pharmacy of UCC, RCSI and TCD

Summary of Key information for 4th-Year Placement Competency Assessment

Competency Assessment Schedule

Competency Assessment is completed twice throughout the four-month placement.

- First assessment (formative – assessment **for** learning) by the end of week 5 (**4th of Oct 2026**)
- Final assessment (summative – assessment **of** learning) by the end of week 12 (**22nd of Nov 2026**)

Competency Assessment Steps

Step One – Students complete their self-assessment on the Competency Assessment Tool, rating their competence in each competency prior to their preceptor completing their ratings.

Step Two – Preceptors complete their assessment on the Competency Assessment Tool, rating their student's competence in each competency.

Step Three – Preceptors meet with their student, to provide feedback, discuss their progress and plan opportunities to practice and further develop their competence.

Rating to be achieved

For students to successfully meet the requirements of the 4th year placement, they must achieve a **rating of “Min – Requires Minimal Supervision” in all relevant competencies**

Competency Assessment Tool

Preceptors and students record the ratings for each competency on the Competency Assessment Tool; this is available on the APPEL Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Log on to My APPEL dashboard, and the Competency Assessment Tool is located in “2026 - 4th Year Competency Assessment”.

Competency Assessment Support

In addition to this guide, APPEL Practice Educators are available to support Preceptors through the Competency Assessment process. Contact details for Practice Educators can be found in the Preceptor Handbook or by contacting the APPEL office at ops@appel.ie.

Competency Assessment

An important aim of APPEL placements is to provide students with the opportunity to develop their competence in the key skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours associated with and expected of pharmacists.

Competence is complex, it is developmental and multidimensional, and changes with time, experience and setting; therefore, to provide students with some structure to help them reflect on and assess their competence, Competency Assessment is completed throughout the placement.

The purpose of the Competency Assessment, within APPEL placements, is to assess and encourage “competence development” throughout the placement. Assessment is undertaken using a standardised framework, the PSI Core Competency Framework (CCF). To encourage development of competence, the assessment process involves self-assessment, feedback, reflection and planning of learning.

The assessment process involves three steps, which are:

1. Students self-assess their emerging competency levels against the PSI CCF.
2. Preceptors evaluate the students’ current competency level.
3. Preceptors provide feedback and discuss with the student their progress and opportunities to practice and develop their competence.

How is Competency Rated?

As assessment of competence can be complex, a rating scale is provided to help with the rating of competencies. However, the main focus in competence development should be on learning, opportunities to practice and regular feedback.

The rating scale describes the level of supervision/intervention that a student requires when they are completing daily tasks and is described in the table below.

Level	Rating	Definition
N/A	Not Applicable	Not possible to evaluate the competency in the placement setting
CLO	Requires Close Supervision	Trainer has to do it themselves or walk the student through it (requires hands on guidance or constant direction)
MOD	Requires Moderate Supervision	Trainer has to prompt the student from time to time (demonstrates some independence but requires intermittent direction)
MIN	Requires Minimal Supervision	Trainer needs to be there just in case (student is more independent but unaware of all risks and still requires supervision for safe practice)

Figure 1: 4th Year Competency Assessment Ratings Scale

During 4th-Year placements, students are at an early point in their learning and are not be expected to be of the same standard of competency as a newly qualified pharmacist, i.e. Ready for independent practice, (which is the standard required at end of 5th-year placement). At the end of 4th-year placement the standard required is “**MIN - Requires Minimal supervision**” in all applicable 13 competencies.

Which Competencies are Assessed?

Students complete their 4th-year placements in a variety of practice settings, therefore the competencies assessed as part of the 4th-year placement are those chosen from the CCF domains which are considered applicable to all practice settings, i.e. Domains 1 (Personal), 2 (Professional) and 3 (Organisation and Management Skills).

Domain	Competency
1. Personal	1.1 Demonstrates leadership 1.2 Confidently makes sound decisions and solves problems 1.3 Establishes and maintains collaborative working relationships 1.4 Communicates effectively
2. Professional	2.1 Applies a ‘person-centred’ approach 2.2 Practises legally and ethically 2.3 Commits to lifelong learning and development 2.4 Adapts to change and innovation 2.5 Commits to evidence-based practice
3. Organisation and Management Skills	3.1 Manages self 3.2 Manages within the workplace 3.3 Manages resources and finance 3.4 Contributes to continuous quality improvement and risk management

In an exceptional circumstance where it is thought a specific competency is not possible to demonstrate in a specific setting, this competency may be rated as “Not Applicable”. In these circumstances both, the Preceptor and the student will be required to enter a reason on the Competency Assessment tool as to why this competency is not applicable.

Some suggested activities that will help support competency development can be found on table 1 (page 12). You can consult these if you are having difficulties with ideas of activities that may help your student develop their competencies or you can contact Practice Educator to ask advice.

How does the Competency Assessment Process Work?

Throughout the placement, the Preceptor will provide regular feedback to their student to support their competence development. On two occasions they will also rate the student's competence. The first assessment (formative assessment - also known as assessment **for** learning) will take place at the end of week five, and a final assessment (summative assessment - also known as assessment **of** learning) will take place at the end of week twelve.

Key Competency Assessment Dates

First assessment to be completed by end of week 5 (4th of October 2026)

Final assessment to be completed by end of week 12 (22nd of November 2026)

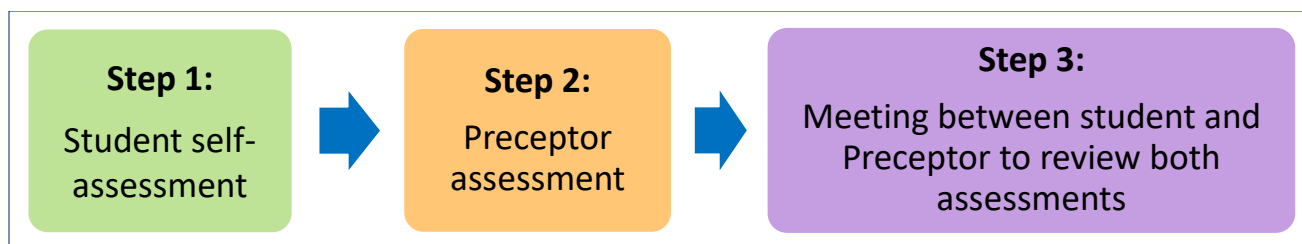
The formative assessment is undertaken to support the student to identify competencies that they need to practice and improve upon. The ratings achieved at this point **do not** contribute towards the overall assessment outcome, or the student's progression. This assessment is completed by the end of week five of placement, to give the Preceptor and the student sufficient time to identify practice opportunities to support the student's improvement and development. There is **no expectation** that students will have reached the required standard of competency by this first assessment.

The summative assessment, also known as an assessment **of** learning, is the final Competency Assessment and is undertaken at week 12. The standard required at the end of the 4th-year placement in order to pass the competency assessment component is "MIN - Requires Minimal supervision" for all the relevant competencies.

If the student has not achieved a "MIN - Requires Minimal Supervision" rating in all applicable competencies by the end of week 12, you should contact a Practice Educator immediately. The Practice Educator will support the Preceptor and student in developing a focused training plan for the final four weeks of the placement to give the student every opportunity to reach a "MIN - Requires Minimal Supervision" by the end of the placement. The final Competency Assessment will remain open until the end of week 16, to allow the Preceptor to amend any scores given at week 12, as appropriate.

How do I Complete the Competency Assessment?

The Competency Assessment will be completed and recorded on the APPEL Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The VLE links each student with their Preceptor so that when the Preceptor logs into the Competency Assessment area, they will only be able to rate their own student's competence. The Competency Assessment is completed in three steps:



Step 1 The student completes a self-assessment exercise where they assign themselves a rating in each of the specified competencies, based on what they consider their competency rating to be.

Step 2 The Preceptor rates the student in each of the specified competencies based on the level of supervision/intervention the Preceptor needs to provide to the student when the student is practising this competency. Before rating the student, they may wish to get feedback from other colleagues who have been involved in the student's training. When completing their ratings, the Preceptor may choose to enter on the VLE any feedback or comments specific to the competencies they are rating. This will be required when a student receives a N/A rating and is particularly helpful when the student receives a "CLO – requires CLOSE supervision" or "MOD - Requires MODERATE Supervision" rating as it acts as a record of the feedback provided to students to support their development.

Step 3 A meeting should be organised between the Preceptor and the student, where they can review their respective ratings together. The following should be discussed as part of this meeting:

- a) The Preceptor should provide constructive feedback that (i) identifies those areas where the student has performed well and (ii) highlights where improvement is needed and how this may be achieved. The provision of feedback is particularly important for the first assessment to ensure the student is best placed to achieve the required rating in the final assessment.
- b) Discuss where any differences have arisen between the ratings – the Preceptor should seek to understand why the student felt they were that rating and provide honest and constructive feedback. It is important to check the student's understanding of the feedback provided.
- c) The Preceptor should identify the areas where the student is not at the required rating; explore why this may be? Have they not yet had opportunities to develop this competency, or do they require more practice in certain activities to develop the competency? The Preceptor should consider and discuss with the student activities that may provide opportunities to develop these competencies and plan these activities in the training plan.
- d) The Preceptor should: record the feedback given at each assessment on the VLE, record actions which should be completed, and give the student guidance on amending the training plan as required.

Don't forget! You will need to click "**Submit**" at the end of the list of ratings to record your answers.

What does the Competency Assessment Dashboard look like on the APPEL VLE?

The image below highlights some of the features of the Competency assessment tool

Y4 Competency Assessment Activity

My Students APPEL Competency Assessment reports

SCALE ^

Level	Description
N/A	Not Applicable Not possible to evaluate the competency in the placement setting
CLO	Requires Close Supervision Trainer has to do it themselves or talk the student through it (requires hands on guidance or constant direction)
MOD	Requires Moderate Supervision Trainer has to prompt the student from time to time (demonstrates some independence but requires intermittent direction)
MIN	Requires Minimal Supervision Trainer needs to be there just in case (student is more independent but unaware of all risks and still requires supervision for safe practice)

Formative assessment
Start: 1 January 2024, 1:00 PM
End: 1 December 2024, 12:59 PM

Summative assessment
Start: 1 December 2024, 1:00 PM
End: 31 December 2024, 11:59 PM

Student Preceptor Student

1. Personal 4 remaining

1.1 Demonstrates leadership

1.2 Confidently makes sound decisions and solves problems

1.2.1 I can make accurate, evidenced based and timely decisions in relation to my work
1.2.2 I am clear when I need to refer to one or more reliable sources and to other people to support decision making and problem solving, including when to refer decisions to a higher level of authority
1.2.3 I communicate and document decisions and their rationale using the appropriate level of detail

Indicative behaviours

Text box for comments

Colour coding

SCALE ^

1. Personal

2. Professional

3. Organisation and Management Skills

3.1 Manages self MOD MOD

3.2 Manages within the workplace CLO CLO

3.3 Manages resources and finance MOD CLO

3.4 Contributes to continuous quality improvement and ri... MIN CLO

Submit

Rating Scale – Click on Scale button to expand and see a detailed description of the rating scale. The details can be hidden by clicking the button again. This button will always float in the same place regardless of where you navigate on the page.

? Indicative Behaviours – Click on question mark to see all of the indicative behaviours that describe some of the ways in which the competency may be demonstrated.

^ Expand Domain – Click on ^ symbol to expand domain to show all of the competencies

Text box for comments – Click on the speech bubble to enter comments regarding the specific competency. For all N/A ratings, entering an explanation via this feature is mandatory. For all other ratings this is optional.

Colour coding – For competencies that are not at the required rating, the area will change colour after you enter a rating.

Incomplete input can be saved - If you wish to save an incomplete assessment, click the green submit button at the bottom. Any competencies you have not rated will be highlighted with a red asterisk, but none the less, your progress will be saved.

Feedback box - If you're the Preceptor, on the bottom of the page you can see a feedback box. You can use this to write overall feedback on the entire Competency Assessment.

Submit button – Both the Student and the Preceptor need to click Submit for their scores to be recorded.

Training Plan Confirmation

Having an active training plan in place is essential for structuring the placement and encouraging student development. As part of the competency assessment process, the Preceptor will be asked to confirm the student has a training plan in place.

What Happens Next?

Practice Educators in each of the Schools of Pharmacy look at each of the formative and summative Competency Assessments, to identify any students or Training Establishments that may benefit from support. Comments and feedback included by Preceptors, particularly when the student receives a N/A, “CLO - requires CLOSE supervision” or “MOD - Requires MODERATE Supervision” rating, are very helpful to Practice Educators when reviewing assessments.



Helpful Hints:

- The Preceptor should arrange a time to complete the Competency Assessment and a time for the meeting with the student to discuss the feedback and ratings from their assessment (step 3 of the process) well in advance of the required deadlines to allow for unexpected delays e.g. due to illness.
- The Preceptor should check that the student understands the feedback they are providing and record their feedback on the VLE.
- The Preceptor should guide the student in updating their Training Plan template to record a schedule (with dates) which establishes opportunities to enable the student to be exposed to activities that will help them reach the required level of competency.
- If the Preceptor believes that any of the competencies are not applicable in their placement setting, they should contact a Practice Educator.
- Seek help early. If the Preceptor has identified or has concerns about the student's development of competency, they should contact the Practice Educator.
- During the first (formative) assessment, when discussing competencies which require improvement, students have identified the following as helpful:
 1. Examples of what their Preceptor would expect to see if the student was demonstrating the competency.
 2. Guidance on how they could develop their competence in that competency.
- When completing the competency assessment, please note that there are two assessment columns: the formative and the summative. You might need to scroll right on your screen to complete the summative assessment. Completion of the competency assessment can be difficult on a phone/smaller device.

Competency Assessment Questions

1. Why is the first (formative) Competency Assessment completed so early in the placement?

The first assessment is a formative assessment (assessment **for** learning). It is undertaken early in the placement, to support the student to become familiar with the competencies and to identify competencies that they need to practice and improve upon. By completing this first assessment by the end of week five, it also allows the Preceptor and the student sufficient time to identify practice opportunities to support their improvement and development. The ratings achieved at this point **do not** contribute towards the overall assessment outcome. There is no expectation that students will have reached the required standard of competency by this first assessment.

2. If the student hasn't been exposed to a competency, how could the Preceptor rate them at the first assessment?

In this case, the Preceptor should choose the N/A rating and plan for opportunities that would support the student to develop this competency on their placement. The system will require the Preceptor to leave a comment with this rating to explain that the student has not yet had the opportunity to develop competence in this competency. The Preceptor can just enter "Not Yet" on the feedback box. If the Preceptor has concerns or would like support with suggestions of activities or opportunities that may expose students to behaviours, they should contact their Practice Educator.

3. What should the Preceptor do when the student is achieving a rating of "CLO – requires CLOSE supervision" or MOD – requires MODERATE supervision" in the first assessment?

The first assessment is to help Preceptors and students identify the student's current competence and put a plan in place to help the student achieve the required level of competency before the final assessment. At the first assessment, the student will only have completed five weeks of their placement and may not have been exposed to many opportunities to develop their competency. The Preceptor should look at the areas in which the student is achieving a rating of "CLO – requires CLOSE supervision" or "MOD – requires MODERATE supervision" ratings and consider possible reasons for these ratings; e.g. is it due to lack of exposure to relevant activities or do they need additional support in this area? The Preceptor should provide honest feedback to their student and agree a plan with the student to address these areas. If the Preceptor has any concerns, they should contact their Practice Educator.

It is important to remember that competency is demonstrated through actions and behaviour; i.e. a student with an excellent knowledge of communications theory may not have developed excellent communications skills and a student with little knowledge of communications theory may be an excellent communicator. Thus, the opportunities the Preceptor provides and the activities the student undertakes while on placement will enable them to practice certain behaviours and contribute to their development of competency.

4. Why is the final assessment completed at the end of week 12 if the placement lasts 16 weeks?

The final assessment is completed at the end of week 12 to allow time for a focused training period if the student is having difficulty achieving the required level of competency for certain competencies.

As competence is developmental, and students need time to become competent in different aspects of the behaviours of a pharmacist, all students should continue practising the behaviours and further developing their competence for the remaining four weeks of placement.

5. When can the Not Applicable (N/A) rating be used?

The competencies assessed as part of the 4th-year Competency Assessment were chosen as it is perceived they could be demonstrated in all practice settings. On the exceptional occasion, where a student will not be exposed to a competency in a specific Training Establishment, the Preceptor can rate that competency as Not Applicable. In past placements, some Preceptors have shared with us that they found that whilst certain competencies initially did not appear to be applicable to their practice setting, on taking a wider view of the competency, they often found the competency applicable. Practice Educators are happy to discuss any queries regarding whether a competency can be applied in a setting. Table 1 (page 12) provides examples of how certain competencies could be demonstrated in the various practice settings.

7. Are there any additional steps if the Preceptor rates a competency as Not Applicable (N/A)?

When a Preceptor rates a competency as Not Applicable the system will require them to enter a comment/feedback. If they have chosen N/A at the first (formative) assessment because the student hasn't had an opportunity to be exposed to this behaviour yet, they can simply enter "Not Yet" in the feedback box. If they are rating N/A because they feel the competency cannot be demonstrated in their Training Establishment, they will be required to enter a reason for this.

8. How do competencies apply in placements in industry and REP practice settings?

Preceptors in Industry/REP are well placed to determine how the competencies of the CCF apply in their particular settings. Previous Preceptors have kindly provided examples of activities their students have undertaken; these can be found in Table 1 (Page12). If the Preceptor has any queries regarding whether certain competencies are applicable in Industry or REP settings, a Practice Educator can discuss this with them.

9. Technical Queries regarding the Competency Assessment Tool

If you require any technical support, please contact the APPEL office at ops@appel.ie.

10. Do I have to complete all of the assessment in one sitting?

No. There is an autosave function, which will save information as you go along. If you wish to stop the assessment, half way through, if you scroll to the bottom of the page you will see a green submit button. When you click this, any competency you have not rated will be highlighted with a red asterisk. On the next occasion you enter the competency assessment tool, you will see the competencies highlighted with the red asterisk, and you can complete your ratings.

11. How do I know all of the ratings have been entered successfully?

Once you have completed a rating on all competencies and clicked submit, a blue bar will appear at the top of the page, highlighting all information has been successfully completed.

12. Can I go back in and change a rating?

Yes, until the assessment period has closed, you can go back in and change any ratings. Just select the new value you wish to enter, and hit submit to ensure the new rating is recorded.



Remember:

If you have any questions about the Competency Assessment, how certain competencies can be applied to a setting, or concerns about a student reaching the required standard, please contact a Practice Educator, who will be happy to support you.

Table 1 - Examples of activities that may help support competency development

Domain 1 – Personal	
<i>Competency</i>	<i>Suggested activities that will expose student to some aspects of this competence (activities may be sector specific)</i>
1.1 Demonstrates leadership	Encourage student to Identify areas for improvement and bring them to team attention e.g.: ➤ In Industry setting: encourage student to participating in regular GMP walk-downs and communicate findings at team meeting e.g raise deviations, tap-ins, near-misses, and incidents as appropriate and not rely on other team members to take responsibility. ➤ In Hospital/Community setting: encourage student to lead by example with regard patient safety and dispensing procedures – clear neat and tidy workspace, following all SOPs etc. ➤ Encourage student to proactively, complete the near-miss log for errors. Discuss errors with colleagues to identify learnings and seek support to reduce errors.
1.2 Confidently makes sound decisions and solves problems	Give student tasks that will require decision-making e.g.: ➤ In Community setting: ask students opinion and encourage them to decide on how they would deal with certain scenarios e.g. medicine shortages or deal with an ethical situation that may arise e.g. improperly written CD prescription. Emergency supply of controlled drug. Doctor self-prescribing. Can advise student to use PSI ethical decision-making tool to guide themselves through the issue ➤ Encourage student to use effective communication skills to relay accurate information to other healthcare professionals. ➤ In Industry setting: could set student an ethical decision around GMP issues e.g. Reporting and documenting inconsistencies in the lab. Risk versus benefit of batch release in different scenarios. Risk versus benefit of removing products with low sales from a market.
1.3 Establishes and maintains collaborative working relationships	Involve student in multi-disciplinary team meetings, give student actions to complete from meeting outputs. Involve students in tasks that require consulting appropriate team members/experts as required when making decisions e.g. consult a technical expert for a technical issue or HR for an HR issue or pharmacist with specialist expertise in hospital.

Domain 2 – Professional	
Competency	<i>Suggested activities that will expose student to some aspects of this competence (activities may be sector specific)</i>
2.1 Applies a “person-centred” approach	In Industry Setting Have student complete tasks that will involve the impact of role on the patient e.g. considering does the PIL contain all relevant safety updates, considering does the batch conform to the necessary standards? Add student to a project team that requires consideration of how the patient will be affected by the project e.g. considering how will research innovation/pricing of medicine/licensing of medicine affect the patient? How will changes be communicated to patient? Are patient’s views involved in the project?
2.4 Adapts to change and innovation	Give student a project which involves implementing changes e.g. if changes in legislation occur give student project to take responsibility for all subsequent actions required e.g. updating SOPs, planning staff training etc. Give student responsibility for drafting a new/updating an SOP for a process/change in process e.g. updating SOPs to reflect prescription extension legislation in community pharmacy.

Domain 3 – Organisation and Management Skills	
Competency	<i>Suggested activities that will expose student to some aspects of this competence (activities may be sector specific)</i>
3.1 Manages Self	Allocate a project/responsibility that requires student to manage their own workload, deadlines and be completed in an efficient manner. Examples of student projects/responsibilities completed in the past are: ➤ Updating SOPs, staff training, completing an audit project ➤ Taking responsible for verifying and processing one HSE community drug scheme (community) ➤ Preparing training for new product release, review guidelines and validation protocols (industry) ➤ Updating IV monograph/quick reference guides (hospital)
3.4 Contributes to continuous quality improvement and risk management	Give student responsibility for completing an audit and reporting back findings to team e.g. PSI pharmacy self-assessment audit, antimicrobial audits or venous thrombosis audits in hospitals, participating in GMP walk-downs and communicating findings at team meeting in industry setting. Have student complete a root cause analysis for a process investigation or review error log. Present findings to team and identify strategies to reduce risk.